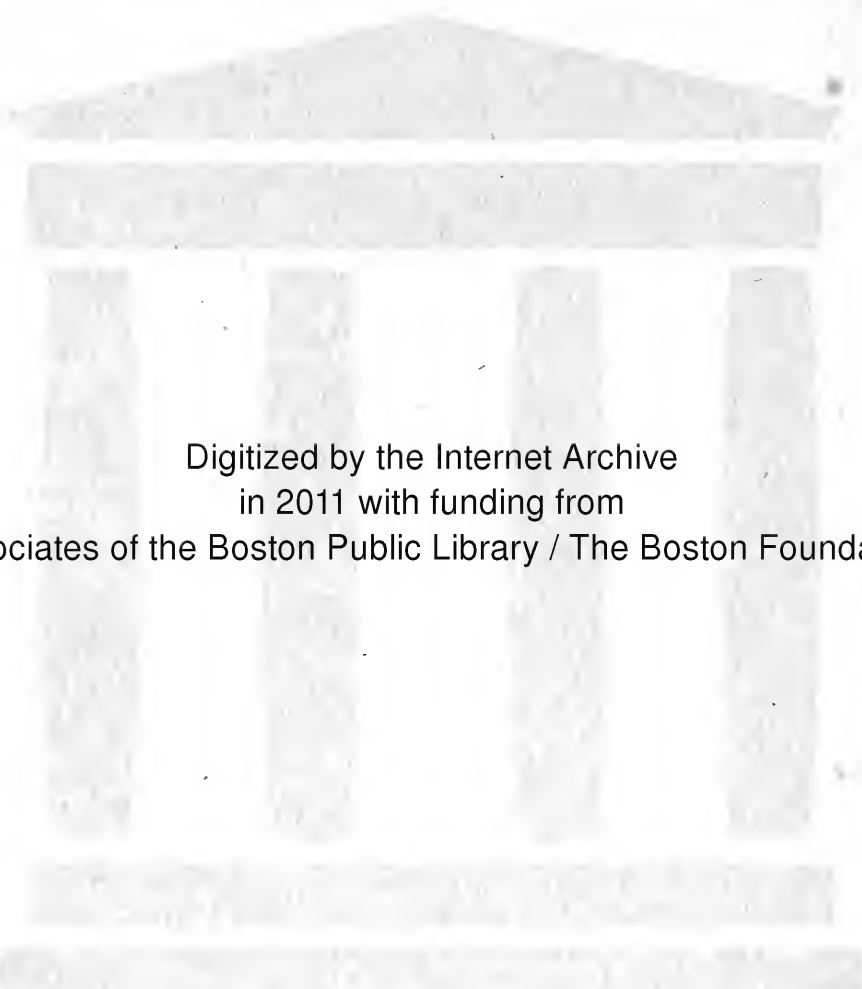


res. 7573.8 no. 11



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
Associates of the Boston Public Library / The Boston Foundation

THE SPEECH

OF

WILLIAM O. GOODE,

ON THE

Abolition of Slavery;

DELIVERED

IN THE

HOUSE OF DELEGATES OF VIRGINIA,

ON

TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 1832.

RICHMOND:

Printed by Thomas W. White.

.....
1832.

THE LIBRARY

WILLIAM O. MARRAS

Abolition of Slavery

1857

Wm. Grant, Aug. 7, 1857

THE LIBRARY

THE LIBRARY

THE LIBRARY

THE LIBRARY

THE LIBRARY

THE LIBRARY

HOUSE OF DELEGATES OF VIRGINIA.

WM. O. GOODE'S Speech on the Abolition of Slavery.

Delivered Tuesday, January 24, 1832.

WEDNESDAY, *January 11, 1832.*

Mr. GOODE of Mecklenburg, rose to move the following resolution :

Resolved, That the select committee raised on the subject of slaves, free negroes, and the melancholy occurrences growing out of the tragical massacre in Southampton, be discharged from the consideration of all petitions, memorials and resolutions, which have for their object, the manumission of persons held in servitude under the existing laws of this commonwealth, and that it is not expedient to legislate on the subject.

MR. RANDOLPH moved the following substitute, to be inserted after the word "Southampton :"

— "be instructed to inquire into the expediency of submitting to the vote of the qualified voters in the several towns, cities, boroughs, and counties of this commonwealth, the propriety of providing by law, that the children of all female slaves, who may be born in this state, on or after the 4th day of July, 1840, shall become the property of the commonwealth, the males at the age of twenty-one years, and females at the age of eighteen, if detained by their owners within the limits of Virginia, until they shall respectively arrive at the ages aforesaid, to be hired out until the nett sum arising therefrom, shall be sufficient to defray the expense of their removal, beyond the limits of the United States, and that said committee have leave to report by bill, or otherwise."

MONDAY, *January 16, 1832.*

MR. BRODNAX, from the committee on the coloured population, presented the following report :

The select committee, to whom was referred certain memorials, praying the passage of some law providing for the gradual abolition of slavery in the commonwealth, have, according to order, had the same under consideration, and have come to the following resolution thereupon :

Resolved as the opinion of this committee, That it is inexpedient for the present legislature to make any legislative enactment for the abolition of slavery.

MR. PRESTON moved that the resolution reported from the committee, be amended, by striking out the word "inexpedient," and inserting the word "expedient."

TUESDAY, January 24, 1832.

On motion of Mr. GOODE of Mecklenburg, the report of the committee on slaves, free negroes and mulattoes, and the amendment of Mr. Preston, were taken up; when Mr. GOODE rose and addressed the house as follows:

MR. SPEAKER:—After the various allusions which have been made to me, personally, through the whole course of this most remarkable debate; I trust, that I shall not be regarded, as imposing too much on the liberality of the house, in rising to give utterance to my thoughts. That this is a task from which I would willingly shrink, must indeed be obvious to all—and for reasons equally obvious. But I am left without the right of election. Circumstances have already marked out my course; and that course I shall pursue, regardless of consequences.

The unexpected incidents which have here transpired; the incalculable interests which are here involved; the great, and, in the estimation of the gentleman from Berkeley (Mr. Faulkner), "the grand and patriotic revolution" sought to be achieved: the animated, and even sublime eloquence, with which the subject has been treated, all conspire to give to our proceedings, a character, and an importance so imposing, as to sink into comparative insignificance, all considerations, which exhaust themselves on a single individual. Yet I feel that I should be faithless to myself—and to those who take an interest in my welfare: faithless to the great cause which I have espoused; and to those who have so generously sustained me in that cause; were I not to invite the attention of the house, to a minute examination of the part which I bore, in the transactions which gave origin to this discussion.

On an early day in our session, I walked into the house, and found our clerk engaged in reporting a voluminous document, which seemed not to have been so fortunate, as to attract the attention of any considerable portion of the house. On application to those around me, I ascertained the document to be, a memorial on the subject of our black population; and that it had been presented by the gentleman from Hanover (Mr. Roane). Anxious to save the time of the house; and mindful of the existence of the rule, which dispenses with

the reading of a petition on its presentation; I suggested to the member from Hanover, the propriety of relieving the house, from the labor of attending to the reading. The suggestion seemed to meet his approbation; and a motion was made by me, to refer the memorial. The gentleman from Pittsylvania (Mr. Witcher), rose in his place, and insisted that the question should be regarded as a *test*; and that the votes should be entered on the journal. I then learned that the memorial contained the principle of *abolition*. My deliberate judgment opposed itself to that principle; and had the house insisted on the vote of reference, I should not have hesitated to maintain my own principles, even at the expense of a seeming inconsistency, in voting against my own motion. But, there was a ready mode of extricating myself; and accordingly, by the indulgence of the house, I withdrew the motion to refer, and submitted one to reject: on which I demanded the ayes and noes.—Yet, I have been surprised to hear, that, I am regarded as making violent opposition to a measure, originally referred at my instance.—The earnestness of my opposition to the principle of abolition, on its very introduction here, is remembered by every member of the house: it was in some degree attributable to that earnestness, that the memorable debate arose, in which it is insisted by the *abolitionists*, that the distinguished member from Dinwiddie (Mr. Brodnax), gathered for himself immortal honors—erected for himself an imperishable statue, which posterity will approach, with reverence and gratitude. The result of the debate is already known—I voted in a minority of *twenty-seven*, and the house sent the memorial to the committee. There it went, and there it staid—day after day—week after week,—and I might almost say, month after month,—without receiving the action of the committee. And what were the occurrences which then took place. Members of the committee submitted propositions, directly affecting the relation of master and servant. Their consideration was deferred,—whilst the propositions themselves found their way to the public, through the medium of the public journals. The conductors of these journals, attaching perhaps too much consequence to the proceedings which resulted in the original reference, and receiving improper impressions from those proceedings, did not hesitate to communicate those impressions to others—and to assume the positions which they intended to occupy. The effects of these things were soon made manifest—uneasiness was diffused through the public mind—men knew not what to anticipate—holders lost confidence in the tenure by which they held their property—purchasers were reluctant to make investments—the value of property became

impaired, in distant, though important markets;—and other results were threatened, greatly to be deprecated. Sir, I considered our proceedings, as calculated to produce disastrous results on the slaves themselves—as calculated to inspire hopes which must ultimately prove delusive—hopes which terminating in disappointment, must have a necessary tendency, to convert the present contentment of the slave, into impatience, and restlessness in his present, and his *future unavoidable condition*. I regarded our proceedings as calculated to fan the latent spark, which might spring up into a blaze, and ignite this great republic. With these convictions fixed in my mind—firmly, painfully fastened there, I felt it to be my imperious duty—and the imperious duty of the house, to make some effort, to arrest these evils.

Sir,—what was the course which I then pursued? Convinced of the absolute necessity of stopping short the investigation of this delicate subject; yet, unwilling to trust to the unaided suggestions of a mind, too much under the dominion of feeling, I determined to appeal to my friends for advice. To whom was it natural that I should have preferred this appeal? To those who had manifested coincidence of views and feelings with myself. To them I did address myself. By them I was advised to pursue the course which I have. I attempted nothing—I made no motion, without mature and deliberate reflection—without able and trusty counsel—without taking the advice of those, in whose judgment I had unbounded confidence. From them I received encouragement, corresponding with the manly, and generous support, which they have afforded to my cause through this trying conflict. Yet, Sir, for the purpose of bringing odium on me—or on the proposition which I submitted—or for some other ulterior end—a report has been circulated—widely—if not industriously circulated, that, I was prompted to the course I have pursued, by my own thoughtless, and giddy brain—and that, in it, I acted against the advice, of some of the most *talented*, and *distinguished* members. That I acted against the *wish* of some, who *originally* entertained views *widely differing* from my own, is what I may not question. Nor was it to be expected, that, with such differing views, I could have conformed myself to *their* wishes,—but I repeat, that my conduct has been regulated, by a due regard to the wishes, and feelings of the party, with whom I became associated, in the incipient stages of this controversy—and the record of our votes will prove it. I wish to be distinctly understood. This report is imputed by me, to no individual member of the house; but groundless as it is—and unjust and illiberal as I regard it, I should not have felt myself under the necessity, of inviting

the attention of the house, so particularly to the history of this part of our proceedings, had not the distinguished member from Dinwiddie (Mr. Brodnax), felt himself bound, to allude publicly, to the folly and indiscretion, which characterized the introduction of the resolution submitted by myself. When that suggestion was publicly made, I determined to give this public narrative, and to assure the public, that, with how little wisdom soever it may have been characterized, the step was not taken inconsiderately, or unadvisedly. It was my misfortune to find myself so circumstanced, as to be deprived of the benefit of all advice, which I might otherwise have derived, from a source so respectable as the gentleman from Dinwiddie: but, unhappily for me, if not unfortunately for my country, that gentleman had assumed a *relation to this subject*, which placed it out of my power, to direct my footsteps by the lights of his understanding. We entertained different views—we sought the accomplishment of different ends—we were necessarily guided by different counsels. He had frequently declared to the house that, “the people demand that something must be done;” and although he has made a powerful attack on the *unlucky*, and *friendless* proposition of the gentleman from Albemarle (Mr. Randolph), yet a great portion of the same speech, is devoted to the demonstration, of the practicability of emancipating, and exporting the slave population of this commonwealth. He has rebuked the folly of my proposition; declaring it *inexpedient to legislate on the subject*. He has reported from the committee that, *it is inexpedient to legislate on the subject*—and we know he will sustain that report by his vote.

I have been charged by the ardent gentleman from Hanover (Mr. Roane), with having unnecessarily provoked this discussion. He has not hesitated to declare, that, I have rashly thrown the subject on the house, “in its most hideous form.” Permit me to remind the gentleman, of the course which I pursued, on offering my resolution. I sent forth my offspring, to meet its destiny in the black, gathering storm, without even the benefit of a father’s benediction. It was not until the gentleman from Albemarle (Mr. Randolph), had offered his amendment, that I made any remarks to the house—and then far from provoking discussion—far from rashly entering the field, of this wide, and wild debate, I was content to suggest such reasons, as I thought demonstrated the impropriety of the discussion—and I conjured the house to abstain from it. But there were others here, who stood pledged to the world, to force the consideration of this question—who did force its consideration—and who, in assuming to themselves the responsibility of the debate, can

only manifest a magnanimity, bearing some proportion to the stupendous magnificence of their designs. So little am I obnoxious to this charge, that, others have actually accused me, of an attempt to suppress—to stifle debate. From this attempt to stifle debate I certainly should have been restrained, by an entire consciousness of its futility. But the two charges are wholly incompatible: The one is an ample refutation of the other—“*non nos tantas componere lites.*”

Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat surprised, by the formal accusation of the gentleman from Hanover (Mr. Roane), of my having assailed the liberty of the press. The conductors of the public journals here, know, and knew, the position which I assumed. That position was, that, the press had drawn improper inferences from our own acts; and that, being itself deceived, it was communicating false impressions to others. To correct these false impressions—to furnish the press with accurate information, as to the real judgment of the house, I deemed it necessary that, the house should discharge the committee. And yet we were entertained with the solemn, and earnest manner of the gentleman, in entering enthusiastically upon the defence of a press—not assailed—not endangered—and which, if assailed, or endangered, is fully competent to its own defence, without the assistance of the gentleman from Hanover. When the liberty of the press is really endangered, every generous son of this republic, will rush to its defence with patriotic enthusiasm.

Other gentlemen have embraced this opportunity of manifesting their zeal for the liberty of the press. I pray them to dismiss their apprehensions. In this country, you cannot restrain, even the licentiousness of the press. No rational man will attempt its liberty. Yet there are some, who have cherished the most violent opposition, to a certain distinguished conductor of a distinguished journal, who now laud him, with extravagant praise. One gentleman in the fulness of his gratitude and admiration, has declared that, if the conductor of that journal, had committed more crime, than was ever entered on heaven's register, against a being—dead or alive—his merit in regard to this subject, would forever efface the immortal record!! I know of nothing in the ordinary, and monotonous occurrences of human life, to which his transport may be compared. It reminded me of the rapture of reconciled lovers—who having long cherished a strong passion, have been kept apart by some harsh obtrusion. At last some favorable incident occurs. The charmer is fortunately thrown into peril. The gallant lover rushes to the rescue,—and having extricated the lovely fair one, relapses into all the fervour of affection. Sir, I was greatly interested, to observe the ec-

stasy, with which the impassioned gentleman from Rock-bridge (Mr. Moore), hung upon the soft, the timid, the abashed—yet unresisting—even yielding Enquirer.

That it may appear to the public, that, I have filled the climax of human folly—I have been subjected to these grave, conflicting charges, in regard to a subject, on which it has been frequently asserted, that, “the People demand that something must be done.” The gentleman from Dinwiddie (Mr. Brodnax), made this declaration,—and it has been frequently repeated. Not only have I assailed the liberty of the press, but I have made a deliberate attempt, to defeat the will of the people, publicly expressed!!! Sir, if “the People demand that something must be done”—why refer this question to “the People.” Surely, gentlemen are not entitled to the benefit of an argument, founded on the supposition, that, “the People demand that something must be done,” at the very moment they are urging upon us, the propriety of referring this question to “the People.” If “the People demand that something must be done,” it cannot be necessary to refer the question to “the People. If it be necessary to refer it to “the People”—“the People” cannot have demanded, “that something must be done.” The truth is, “the People” have not spoken:—a few voices have been heard—and the member from Brunswick (Mr. Shell), has already exposed the weakness of their numbers. Gentlemen grossly deceive themselves, if they mistake these gentle whispers, for the irresistible, omnipotent voice of “the People.”

Perhaps, Sir, there is something specious in this suggestion, of referring a question to “the People.” I fear that, it may hereafter obtain currency in this land;—but I beg leave on this occasion, to enter my most solemn protest, against the introduction of any such practice. There are obvious reasons, springing up from the nature of *this* subject, which render it *peculiarly* improper, to throw the East under the necessity, of discussing the topic, in the very presence of our slave population. But the practice itself, unconnected with *this* subject—is entirely objectionable, and inadmissible. Legislative power can be exerted *safely* by the legislature only. In the exercise of these powers, you cannot *safely*, challenge the action of the constituent body. The practice would be fraught with frightful tendencies—tendencies fatal to the public tranquillity. Take this question as a mere example. In relation to it, the people of the West are supposed by their representatives, to have one interest. The people of the East, have a conflicting interest. To require the people to decide the question, would array one portion of the community, against another—and unavoidably generate heats, and feuds,

calculated to relax, and to dissolve, the ties, by which our people are united. To refer to the qualified voters of this commonwealth, the decision of any legislative question, would violate the principle of that compromise, which obtained in the late convention. The embarrassing difficulties encountered by that body, are fresh in the memory of every gentleman. There was a party—and a powerful party—which insisted, and strenuously insisted, that, the organic law, should be so constructed as that, man, and man alone, should be represented in the legislative councils. Another party, as strenuously insisted that, society was instituted partly for the protection of property, and to secure that protection, it was necessary, that the influence of property, should be exerted upon the deliberations of the legislature. The discussion of this question agitated, and convulsed the whole republic; and threatened to result in the division of the state. The expedient of a compromise was finally adopted. Property was allowed a representation—though perhaps not its just representation; and the public was restored to its accustomed repose. The great effort then was, to enable property to protect itself, against unjust and inordinate taxation. It was then apprehended by the fathers of the land, that, if the white population of the state, were adopted as the basis of representation, the legislature would not be sufficiently disposed, to abstain from the imposition of heavy burdens:—but should this question be referred to the decision of the qualified voters, the very existence of the property as such, would be subjected to the operation of the repudiated basis of white population. Sir, in the presence of the western delegation—in the presence of the western people---I enter my earnest protest---and call upon my eastern brethren, to attend to this my solemn warning.

This proposition to refer this question to the people, is a direct attack on the representative principle. It denies that the General Assembly, is a fair exponent of the will of our constituents. It denies the efficacy of the representative principle, in embodying and reflecting the popular will. The sanctity of this principle, is essential to the preservation of our political institutions. It is the great characteristic, which distinguishes our own frame of polity, from the tumultuous democracies of ancient days. It is the solitary invention of modern times, in the abstruse, and complicated science of government. It is the great, and powerful principle, which, enables the gentlemen from Brooke and Norfolk, to co-operate on this momentous occasion. It is the efficacious principle, which embodies in our federal councils, the statesmen of Boston, and of New Orleans. It is the pervading, the vital prin-

ciple, which diffuses itself through our whole system, imparting life, and animation, to the intire body politic. Impair the energies of this principle, you introduce anarchy, together with those turmoils, and convulsions, which buried in ruins the Republics of old.

The habit of referring questions to the people, will necessarily debase the representative character. Instead of having these seats filled, with firm, manly, independent patriots, ready to incur that just responsibility, unavoidably, and inseparably, incident to their situation; our counsels will be guided by men, ever seeking to avoid that responsibility—ever ready to screen themselves, by a call for the expression of the constituent will. Sir, it becomes us as men, to whom are confided, the great interests of this great community, promptly to repudiate this fatal suggestion; and to proceed on our own responsibility, to the decision of this agitating subject.

Mr. Speaker,---in the discussion of this question, gentlemen have indulged in learned reflections, on the evils of slavery in the abstract. They have discussed the morality—the religion of the thing—as though we were deliberating on its original introduction. I shall not imitate their example. With all my rashness, all my folly, I shall not presume to enter the lists, with these learned Theologians—I am content to rest that part of the subject, on the beautiful effort of my friend from Petersburg (Mr. Brown). It is true, that I have read of the curse of Canaan—“cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.” It is true, that I have read in Holy Writ, of the cause of that curse, as it fell originally from the lips of Noah. It is true, that I have read of the blessing of Shem, and of the prayer for the prosperity of Japheth. It is true too that, I have perused some sage reflections, in which it is insisted that the Europeans, the supposed descendants of Japheth, in the act of seizing on this continent, and of exterminating the defenceless aborigines, have forced themselves into the “tents of Shem;” and that in the persons of the Africans, we hold as our “servants” the descendants of Canaan. But, in the decision of this great question, I attach but little consequence to these learned disquisitions. It is sufficient for me to know, that, the thing exists among us—and exists in a form, not to be controlled—that it did exist in this land, and in a form not to be controlled, at the time when our ancestors were called upon, to establish our organic law. I know we cannot control the irresistible force of circumstances. Slavery, sir, has been denounced, as a heavy curse on any nation. The distinguished gentleman from Dinwiddie (Mr. Brodnax), emphatically

pronounced it to be "the heaviest curse, which an angry Providence could in his wrath, inflict upon a sinful people." I may not controvert this proposition; because I am no Theologian—certainly I can affix no *limit*, to the *Omnipotence* of Divine Providence.

Gentlemen have adopted the reasoning of philosophical writers, and political economists, demonstrating that the labor of the slave, is less productive than that of the freeman.—I shall not assail this *reasoning*.—But when, for illustration, resort is had, to *facts* resulting from the organization of our society—from the relation of master and servant—I shall take the liberty of examining those facts.

Numerous statistics have been exhibited, for the purpose of shewing the deficiency of exports from the slave holding states, when compared with those from the non-slave holding states; and from them it has been inferred and argued, that the labor of the slave is less productive than that of the freeman. I state, in the spirit of frankness and candor, that I have no confidence in any argument, founded on the notion of the balance of trade—but least of all, can I accredit one, founded on an exhibit of tabular statements, shewing the mere amount of exports, from particular ports of the union—and inferring that those commodities are reared in the states from which they are exported. The fallacy of such reasoning must be obvious, to any cool, candid and thoughtful mind, engaged in the investigation, and elucidation of truth. We know positively that the mere amount of exports from particular ports, will not enable us to ascertain the productive power of the state, in which the port may happen to be located. The staples of the state of North Carolina, are in a great degree, vended within the limits of this commonwealth—and are shipped from our ports. Could it be just to infer, or to argue, that, the labor of Virginia produces these staples! The products of the land and labor of South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia, are exported in large quantities from New York. The teeming abundance of Ohio and Kentucky, finds its way to the Atlantic, through the icy regions of the north—or is wafted on the broad bosom of the Mississippi, to find a market in New Orleans. It must be obvious to every member, that, Louisiana and New York, are not entitled to the credit of having reared these commodities; and it must be equally obvious that, any argument which extends to them that credit, is entirely unworthy of our confidence. But there are circumstances in our commercial history, to which I invite the attention of those gentlemen, who *deride* the productive power of slave labor; whilst they estimate the value of all labor, by the amount of commodity reared for exportation. The cotton,

tobacco and rice of our country, are produced almost exclusively by slave labor. They are grown in the slave holding states. The *entire* population of the U. States is 12,856,154 souls. The *slave* population is 2,010,629 souls; less than *one-sixth* of the *entire* population. In the year 1826, which was a fair average year, selected merely because I happened to have in my possession, the necessary document; the *entire* exports of all our domestic productions, was \$53,058,710. The exports of cotton, tobacco and rice, the products of slave labor exclusively, was \$32,289,856; more than *three-fifths* of the *entire* exports of domestic productions. The house then discovers that less than *one-sixth* of the *entire* population, has produced more than *three-fifths* of the *entire* exports—and yet gentlemen who estimate the value of labor, by the amount of commodity reared for exportation; deride the productive power of slave labor, and denounce “slavery as the greatest curse, which an angry Providence could in his wrath, inflict upon a sinful people.”

The gentleman from Kenhawa (Mr. Summers), as an exemplification of the inferiority of slave labor, has challenged our attention to a comparison of the states of Kentucky and Ohio. Does the thoughtful, sagacious mind of that gentleman, discover nothing in the condition of those states, to which the disparity of their growth may be attributed, save the circumstance to which he has attracted our attention? Kentucky for her prosperity, has relied in a great degree, on the exertion of her own energies: the wealth of other regions has been poured into the lap of Ohio; Kentucky at most, has shared with the southwestern states, the emigration from the old slave holding states; Ohio may be said, to be the great reservoir of emigration, from the northern, and non-slave holding states. It should not therefore excite our wonder, that, Ohio has increased more rapidly than Kentucky. Sir, I presume it will be more profitable, to examine the effects said to have been produced on our own commonwealth, by the existence of slavery within her limits; and here I may be allowed to express the pain, and mortification with which I was afflicted, by the remarks submitted by the member from Buckingham (Mr. Bolling). That gentleman has discovered among our people, a depravation of the moral principle; which he regards as one of the effects of slavery. It is curious to mark the wide difference between the opinions of this gentleman; and those of the great Edmund Burke. Burke believed that, the existence of slavery in the American colonies, gave to our ancestors, an early idea of importance and superiority, which imparted an elevation of character, raising them far above the commission, or toleration of littleness, or

meanness; but the gentleman from Buckingham discovers something in the relation of master and servant, calculated to corrupt our morals, and to debase our understandings. I appeal from his decision to the judgment of the American people. I do emphatically protest against his representation of the character of our citizens. I claim for the citizens of this commonwealth, no peculiar, no extraordinary merit; but I do earnestly insist, that, they are equal in virtue; equal in morals; equal in intelligence, and equal in merit to those of any state in the confederacy. But, suppose that I am mistaken, does it become us to proclaim the infamy of the commonwealth? Is there a son who knows of the folly, the weakness of his mother? Does he know of her guilt, her shame? Let the fatal secret be forever hidden in the deepest recesses of his own soul. The horrid consciousness is enough to poison the sources of his happiness. To give it publicity would madden his brain.

In treating of the effects of slavery, gentlemen have indulged in gloomy representations, of the agricultural condition of the commonwealth. They have strained, and tortured their imaginations, for the invention of metaphors, and figures of speech, suited to their own mournful conceptions, of the misery and wretchedness of our country. Indulging in the most capricious freak, they have passed by all the beauties of the forest, and the willow, weeping o'er the graves of their ancestors, and appealed to the *pine* for poetic inspirations. They speak of nothing but deserted mansions; enclosures already gone to decay; extensive fields turned to waste, and gullies deep-furrowed in the sides of our hills. One would imagine that, devastation and desolation reign universally, through the dominions of the east. Is this a just representation? Where is Wilton? Where Verina? The seats of the ancestors of the gentleman from Albemarle. Where is Curles? Where is Shirley? Where is Westover? Where is Brandon? Where that beautiful tract of country, stretching along the banks of the Rappahannock? Where those extensive, highly cultivated farms, which adorn the shores of the broad Potomac? Where, sir, is Gloucester? Rich, luxuriant, abundant Gloucester. And where, sir, is Southampton itself? Great injustice has been done this country. Sir, it is in a state of *improvement*; and I call on every member, to reflect on the condition of his own neighborhood, and to respond to this my declaration. A better system of agriculture has been introduced, than existed here ten years since. We do better ploughing. We attend more to the rotation of crops. We attend more to the raising of manures. There is more attention to all the operations of the farm—and there is

an obvious improvement exhibited in the whole face of the country. If each gentleman will reflect on his own neighborhood, and form his judgment on his own observation; instead of taking upon trust, the fanciful, desponding conceits of others, I have the utmost confidence, that, not one will withhold his assent to the truth of my suggestions. I have been told, and I believe it is true that, a gentleman near me, a member of this house, representing too a *tide-water* county, has gathered three hundred barrels of Indian corn for each plough. Shall this country be described as a barren waste? No, sir, the country has improved, and it is yet improving; and what may seem strange to those who have not attended to the fact—improvements have been introduced into every neighborhood, first upon the large estates, on which slave labor most abounded. I know that in other countries, improvements have been introduced on small farms, after the division of estates had rendered it necessary that holders should improve their farms as a means of subsistence; but the remark is not true in this country. Improvements have been introduced here—first, on the large estates, on which slave labor most abounds;—and for the truth of this assertion, I appeal to the candor, experience and observation of every member of this house. Perhaps I astound the house in announcing the proposition which I am about to do. Nevertheless, I shall make the annunciation. Some time during last fall, accident, or destiny, threw me on the north side of the Potomac. I was in the city of Philadelphia; the hospitality of a gentleman, to whom I was previously unknown, and to whom I owe the stronger obligation, afforded me an opportunity of seeing the adjacent country. I saw lands which I was told would command \$200 per acre. I saw the meadows of the Schuylkill and Delaware; and I assure the house that I did not see one farm better cultivated, better arranged, better managed in any particular, than is the farm of Richard Sampson, in the county of Goochland. Sir, the agricultural product of our state is greater now than it ever was at any previous period; and the gentleman from Brooke (Mr. Campbell), who exhibited his tabular statements on yesterday, to show the diminution of our exports, might have learned, had he pushed his inquiry, that the result was effected, not by the diminished quantity of staple reared, but by the depreciation in the price. These reflections have led me to the conclusion, that the baneful effects of slavery on our agriculture, have not been developed, as described in the gloomy pathos of our orators.

Gentlemen have indulged in bitter lamentations, over the depopulation of this commonwealth. One might imagine

that our country is abandoned, and deserted to sink into hopeless ruin. Yet, in the very moment they indulge in these affecting representations, they adduce incontestible proof, of the regular, and even rapid increase of our population. Yes, sir—proof of the regular and rapid increase of the white population of this commonwealth. In 1790 the white population was 442,117; in 1800 it was 513,865; in 1810 it was 551,553; in 1820 it was 603,081; in 1830 it was 694,300. This statement exhibits a constant, regular, and rapid increase, of the white population of the state. An increase, which compared with foreign nations—exhibits even startling results. An increase, not to be compared with the unnatural and bloated obesity of Ohio—but one as great as would allow of the maturity and justness of proportion, necessary to the structure of a perfect stature. This increase is the natural, and necessary consequence of the present condition of the commonwealth. Gentlemen astonish me by complaints of depopulation. Our population must of necessity have increased---and of necessity must continue to do so. Have any of the positive checks to population, found an existence in this land? Had this been so, the effect must have been first developed, on the laboring class of this community; for no man can imagine that the laboring class would be supplied with abundance, whilst those who control them are subject to want. But gentlemen display their ample statistics to demonstrate the rapid, the alarming increase of the laboring class of Virginia—so that the positive checks to population cannot have found existence here. Have the negative checks found such existence? Is any gentleman conscious of their operation? Does the rose fade on the cheek of the damsel, because her hand remains unsought?---Beauty far oftener withers and dies, because of the immaturity in which the tender bud is plucked. No man qualified to preside over a family, is restrained from contracting the matrimonial connexion, by the apprehension that his family is to come to want. Oftener indeed does it happen, before the youth attains to the condition of a freeman, that, the soft, gentle pressure of the hand of devotion has sent a thrill through the soul of loveliness. Sir, there has been no check upon the increase of our population. It is true, our growth has not equalled that of the state of New York; but that may be accounted for, without referring to the existence of slavery. Our people have emigrated; but they have not flown from the evils of slavery; for they are now found residing in slave holding states. Virginia has in a great degree peopled Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi; and even Louisiana and Missouri have given to her sons a shelter and a home. To appreciate the energies of this state,

let the imagination roam back for fifty years, and contemplate the great Valley of the Mississippi. What does it there behold? One vast, one wild, unbroken wilderness. The stag there reclined under the shade of the oak; the prowling wolf howled through the desert; the wild yell of the savage red man, burst upon the silence of surrounding solitude!—The sound sunk on the deep, green wood; and all nature was restored to solemn and sublime tranquillity! The enterprise of our citizens shot forth, and penetrated the trackless recesses of these wilds. The valor of our citizens conquered the country from the fierceness of the aborigines. The industry of our citizens paid down the purchase money into the federal treasury. The forests fell at the approach of civilization. Extensive farms were scattered through the plain; houses sprung up in the land, the abode of civilized, contented, prosperous man. Edifices were erected. Splendid palaces, exciting the wonder of the thoughtful traveller, whose wearisome approach is gladdened, and greeted, by the verdant luxuriance of their wide-waving fields. Virginia has spoken nations into being. Virginia is literally the mother of nations. And yet the reviled, the abused slave, has been the instrument in the hand of the white man, by which he has accomplished these vast results. And what were the circumstances under which they were accomplished? Sir, I will not detain the house, to consider the evils which afflicted our country in consequence of the commercial convulsions which agitated the commercial world, between the years 1816 and 1823. I will not detain the house to consider the evils which sprang from the wild spirit of over-trading, which pervaded our own state during that period. I will not refer to those heavy calamities with which we have been afflicted, by federal misrule. I only ask the house to reflect, that our own lands have been repeatedly purchased by our own citizens; and the purchase money as repeatedly invested in the lands of other states. Individual energy has triumphed over the prodigality of government, and purchased an empire equal to that originally ceded to the federal authorities. It is astonishing that the energies of Virginia have been so little relaxed by the operation of this severe process. Sir, she has accomplished these great results—She has purchased and peopled mighty regions, by throwing off the mere redundancy (if I may use the expression), the mere effervescence of her population: nor have we cause to repine over this course of events. Sir, we may have lost our citizens, but we have planted allies through the expanded west, who yet cherish for the land of their nativity, the strongest, the most endearing affections. Our friend, our brother is torn from among us, but he is prosper-

rously planted in the mighty distance; and though mountains may rise between us, rudely obtruding their mighty crags; rivers gushing from the mountain tops, pouring and tumbling over rocky precipices, may stretch between us their angry floods; yet oft, at the silent hour of night, when musing by his own solitary fire-side, cheered only by the little cricket's chirp, will memory lose him in fond meditation on the casual, but endearing enjoyments of his childhood; which lighted up, and cheered the hearth of his fathers. Sir, if that fatal day must come, when this great confederacy shall rock upon its basement, when it shall be thrown into mighty fragments—nature will triumph; ourselves and our brothers will cling into an embrace, not to be severed by the grand convulsion.

Mr. Speaker,—It has been insisted, by both the gentlemen from Rockbridge (Mr. Moore and Mr. McDowel), that, slavery impairs our strength in time of war. One of them estimated that one half of our effective force, must be retained, as a necessary precaution against the danger of insurrection. This suggestion has been urged with so much emphasis—and with such an air of confidence, that, I feel myself greatly embarrassed, in attempting even to impair its force. Yet I may inquire of gentlemen whether, in adopting the opinions they avow, they have not disregarded the lights of experience? We have gone through two wars of much difficulty. Our revolutionary conflict especially, was conducted amidst the most embarrassing difficulties—against the most powerful nation in the world—in the very heart of our own territory—in the very presence of our slave population—Yet, notwithstanding our colonial weakness, there was no difficulty in the management of our slaves; and there is no circumstance in the history of those days, which sustains the position here assumed. On the contrary, men of wisdom, and sagacity—whose locks are whitened with the frosts of years, have made suggestions on this subject, worthy of the profound attention of statesmen. Sir,—in this age—money is the sinew of war—it is not by the exertion of mere brute force, that, the disputes of empires are now adjusted:—this is effected in an eminent degree, by the developement of the sources of wealth. It was the wealth of England, which wrested the sceptre from the grasp of Napoleon. For the successful prosecution of war, it is necessary that there should be a regular, and unceasing stream of wealth, flowing into the public treasury. The labor of society is the source of its wealth; and in a country where the labor is performed by the citizen, all the operations of society are embarrassed, by converting the citizen into the soldier. March to the field the mechanic, and the ploughman—the mechanic operations of society are neglected, and

the glebe remains unturned—the productive power of labor is impaired—the sources of national wealth are exhausted—the strength of the state, is lost, or destroyed. In a country where the manual labor is performed by those not admitted to the rights of citizenship—all the necessary agricultural operations—all the necessary mechanic arts, are performed without any sensible interruption, even amid the tumults of war. The government draws from society its regular, and its necessary supply, and the vigor of the state is comparatively unimpaired.

Sir,—there is no well grounded apprehension of a servile insurrection in time of war—we have armed men then in the land—sembled, and able by a movement to crush such an effort. Our own history and the history of the world, will justify the opinion, that, without any aid, the old men and boys not required to bear arms, are able to preserve order, and discipline among the slaves. Our citizens who reside where slaves are most numerous, are convinced of the correctness of this opinion—and dread much more the folly of legislation, than even the violence of infuriated fanaticism. The gentleman from Rockbridge (Mr. McDowel), has labored to produce a different impression—and felt himself authorised to report extracts from documents, in the possession of the executive, by which he sought to satisfy the house, that, a panic pervaded that whole community, adjacent to the scene of the Southampton tragedy. That great excitement, strong emotion, restlessness, impatience, and uneasiness, diffused themselves through that community, is what I shall not deny—that craven fear existed there, is what I utterly deny, and repel. Sir, on the recital of horrid barbarities, humanity must experience strong emotion, strong sympathy for the sufferers. That it is so, can be no cause of just reproach. It was natural that it should be so, in the instance to which the gentleman referred. Sir, the people had no accurate information of the character of the outrages actually committed. Their imaginations were excited by extravagant representations; and perfect equanimity was not to be expected. But the gentleman from Rockbridge, acting in the character of a statesman; in the exercise of his official functions—with all the means of information at hand—with a knowledge of the nature and extent of the transaction—occupying a position from which he surveys with composure, events gone by; seeks to seize on this momentary feeling; this evanescent excitement, to be relied on as a *reason of state*, for disturbing the relation of master and servant! for affecting vitally—for destroying the property of one half the citizens of the commonwealth!! Yes sir, the

Southampton tragedy is relied upon as the justification of this great innovation: "*this grand and patriotic revolution.*"

Mr. Speaker,—I call on gentlemen acting too in *their* character of statesmen, to reflect on the incidents of the Southampton tragedy; and I have an abiding confidence, that they will with me conclude, that, it affords satisfactory proof, of the futility of all apprehension, of any successful, any general, or even extensive insurrection. Sir, it will be remembered by the house, that, the strength of the insurgents ranged from forty to sixty men—freed from all restraints of religion, morality, or humanity,—stimulated by the frantic genius of fanaticism,—and exulting, and rioting in death and murder. Yet it cannot have escaped our attention, that, they took not the life of a human being, where *three* white men were assembled! Is this the foe to strike terror into the legislature of Virginia. Sir, our citizens are safe when they bear the proportion of one to ten. It is proven by the history of this notable insurrection. It is demonstrated, and illustrated by the history of St. Domingo. It is impossible for our slaves to sustain a continued rebellion; they have not the means of concert, of any extensive co-operation; they are without discipline, without arms, without the habit of command; or of subordination to one another;—and if they were not deficient in these particulars, they have not, nor can they procure the means of subsisting an imbodied force. To sustain an imbodied force in the field, there must be a regular, and constant supply of provisions—to procure which, requires the agency of factors, and public functionaries. It is impossible for the insurgents to command these supplies; and it is therefore impossible for them to remain imbodied. They must fall a part of their own incoherence. The gentleman from Brunswick (Mr. Shell), has attributed the suppression of this insurrection to three men and two boys; who encountered this formidable foe, at the house of Dr. Blunt. He is mistaken in his supposition; had the insurgents encountered no opposition, they must have separated by the force of the circumstances to which I have alluded. I do not maintain that, our citizens are exempt from violence, and murder, and conflagration. No society can enjoy such an exemption. Casual outbreakings of popular rage, have marked the history of every people. Lyons and Bristol have lately suffered by the violence of popular fury; and our history will prove that, we are not more exposed to such calamities, than are all the nations of the earth.

Mr. Speaker,—I trust that my remarks may have some tendency, to reconcile us to the condition, into which we have been thrown by immutable fate—to remove our misapprehensions, as to calamities supposed to have sprung from our so-

cial relations, and to dissipate apprehension for the safety of the republic. I trust the house is perfectly satisfied, that, the presence of our slave population does not endanger the safety of our citizens. By what motive then shall we be prompted to banish the slave from the limits of the commonwealth? Is it for the sake of the slave himself? Do we expect to better his condition? Gentlemen in the generosity of their nature have admitted that, the slave is humanely treated. He has an unrestrained abundance of good, substantial, wholesome food---as well for his family, as for himself. He and his family have an ample allowance of comfortable clothing. He is, for the most part well housed. He enjoys many reasonable indulgencies. He has set apart for his own use, his garden---or his little field, from which he derives many of the comforts, and even some of the luxuries of life; beyond the reach of the peasantry of other countries. Is he sick? Is his wife, his child, struck down by the hand of disease? He is secure of the best medical aid---of the kindest, the most constant attentions. Is he charged with the commission of crime? He is not entitled to jury trial---because his peers are not good and lawful men---but he is secure of a fair, and public trial. He has two chances to establish his innocence; first before the justice of the peace, and secondly before the courts of police. He is secure of the benefit of counsel, by the humanity of our law---and the commonwealth compels the attendance of his witnesses. He resides in a civilized society, in a well regulated community, in which he is protected from all outrage, and even the power of his own master is restrained from all violent excesses. What have you to offer as an equivalent for these certain, these substantial advantages? A perilous freedom, a capricious license for the commission of crime. To be sent to live---we know not where---among institutions we know nought of. Who can conjecture his future condition? He may become the subject of a despot. He may be thrown amidst political convulsions. He may be exposed to violent outrage. He, his wife, his daughter, or his child, may become the subject of capricious tyranny. Sir, I call upon this house to determine, whether they are likely beneficially to serve, the objects of their humane benevolence.

But gentlemen urge that we must act for our own sakes. They contemplate with peculiar horror the day, when the great flood of slave population, shall break over the barrier of the lofty blue mountain, and overflow the towering summits of the west. This suggestion has been already discussed---humorously by my friend from Brunswick (Mr. Shell),---seriously by my friend from Petersburg (Mr. Brown). Sir, I have nothing of the ludicrous in my composition; I am

obliged to consider things seriously; and following the reflections of my friend from Petersburg—I ask whether there be nothing in the condition; the manners and pursuits of the western people, which should admonish them to dismiss their fears. Sir, they are graziers, or they are farmers. They want not the slave to follow, or attend their flocks, and herds. As farmers, their demand for labor is but occasional, or periodical; confined for the most part to seed time, and harvest. They are not under the necessity of burdening themselves with the support of the laborer the whole year round: they can procure labor on occasion, in quantities suited to their demand. Hence, their demand for slave labor will not be effectual. It cannot compete with the greater demand, which will exist in the planting country. The man who grows tobacco, cotton and other products of a *plantation*, has a constant, and unremitted demand for a regular force, the whole year round: the operations of his estate must not depend on any precarious supply of labor; it must be certain, and always at command. The planter, therefore, has a greater demand for the labor of the slave, and he will pay more for it, than the farmer, or the grazer. The labor of the slave like every thing else, will go to where it is most useful---will meet the most effectual demand; and our western brethren need not apprehend, that they are to be overrun by our slaves, unless they are willing, and able to pay more for them, than can be obtained in other parts. It was by the operation of this principle, that slavery was banished from the northern states. The northern people became farmers and graziers—they had no effectual demand for slave labor: it was less useful to them, than in the southern states: it sought the effectual demand of the south; and the number of slaves diminished in the north, until the slave interest, enfeebled and exhausted, was unable to resist the abolition of slavery. Such, Sir, I believe, under the dispensation of Divine Providence, will be the course of events here. The superior usefulness of the slaves in the south, will constitute an effectual demand, which will remove them from our limits. We shall send them from our state, because it will be our interest to do so. Our planters are already becoming farmers. Many who grew tobacco as their only staple, have already introduced, and commingled the wheat crop. They are already semi-farmers; and in the natural course of events, they must become more and more so. As the greater quantity of rich western lands, are appropriated to the production of the staple of our planters, that staple will become less profitable. We shall gradually divert our lands from its production, until we shall become actual farmers. Then will the necessity for

slave labor diminish; then will the effectual demand diminish, and then will the quantity of slaves diminish, until they shall be adapted to the effectual demand.

But, gentlemen are alarmed lest the markets of other states be closed against the introduction of our slaves. That such an event may be occasioned, by the folly of our own legislation, is possible, if not probable—that any thing else should produce it, is to my mind most improbable. The excitement which lately existed in some of the states, will soon lose its ephemeral existence; things must flow back into their natural channel; and the Southampton insurrection though it may be remembered as a thing which once had existence, will not be regarded as such an event, as should disturb the settled policy of a nation. Sir, the demand for slave labor must increase through the south and west. It has been heretofore limited by the want of capital; but when emigrants shall be relieved from their embarrassments, contracted by the purchase of their lands—when they shall have erected their necessary buildings, the annual profits of their estates, will constitute an accumulating capital, which they will seek to invest in labor. That the demand for labor must increase in proportion to the increase of capital, is one of the demonstrations of political economists; and I confess, that for the removal of slavery from Virginia, I look alone to the efficacy of that principle; together with the circumstance that our southern brethren, are constrained to continue planters, by their position, soil and climate. But, suppose I am mistaken in all which I have submitted to the house—suppose the evils of slavery to be as great as they have been here represented—suppose slavery to be “the greatest curse which an angry Providence could in his wrath inflict upon a sinful people.” Is it expedient? Is it possible for this assembly to banish it from this land?

Sir, if we may not confide in the operation of natural causes? If we may not trust to the developement of the mysteries of time—then are we without hope in this particular,—for it is impossible, that the object can be accomplished by legislation. Others I know come to a different conclusion; and many contend that, the practicability of the thing, has been already demonstrated. In the examination of this proposition, I shall confine my remarks to the plan submitted by the gentleman from Dinwiddie (Mr. Brodnax), because that plan, though not drawn out in the form of a resolution; but suggested merely by way of argument, has been regarded by the abolitionists in this house, as entitled to the greatest consideration. Indeed, it has been treated by the gentleman, and his admirers, as containing an irrefragible, an indisputable de-

monstration. With others, the ardent gentleman from Hanover (Mr. Roane), has proclaimed it to be a conclusive demonstration—and seemed to consider that fatuity itself, would scarce attempt its refutation. Will the house allow me to examine this plan. It contemplates the annual removal of six thousand souls. It is known to the house, that a number of slaves are now annually exported to the south—that number has been estimated at 8500; but my friend from Petersburg (Mr. Brown), has examined this subject with some minuteness, and thinks that we may venture the declaration, that at least 5000 are thus annually exported; and that without cost, and without the agency of the commonwealth. But, gentlemen assert that this drain of 5000 annually, is to be closed by the force of circumstances; and *we* think it may be closed by our own system of legislation. Then we are to close an annual drain of 5000; to open an annual drain of 6000. The increase of exportation is, therefore, to equal 1000 souls—but notwithstanding the present exportation of 5000 souls, the annual increase of the slave population, far exceeds 1000 souls—so that the increased exportation, will not equal the annual increase of the slaves. With great deference to the opinions of gentlemen, who profess unlimited confidence in this plan, I submit, whether it be possible to remove the slave population of the state, by means of an exportation, not equal to the annual increase. But, Sir, if for the sake of argument, it be conceded that, this operation might in time accomplish its object, yet the plan itself can never be executed. The estimated cost of transporting our slaves from the continent of America, to the coast of Africa, is thirty three dollars for each soul. The cost of transporting 6000 souls, as estimated by the gentleman from Dinwiddie, is two hundred thousand dollars: but this sum is the mere cost of transportation and settlement. The gentleman repudiates the very idea of violating the sanctity of private property. Slaves he regards inviolable property. He would wrest no slave from his holder, against the consent of that holder—or without just compensation. Just compensation for our slaves would average two hundred dollars each; which would afford an aggregate of \$1,200,000—this sum added to the \$200,000, the cost of exportation, affords a general aggregate of \$1,400,000, to be raised annually by a tax on property, for the single purpose of accomplishing this plan, and entirely exclusive of the civil list. To support the civil list, a property tax is now imposed of \$277,000; which added to the amount necessary to accomplish the plan of the gentleman, will make a sum equal to \$1,677,000, to be raised annually by a tax on property; instead of the sum of \$277,000, the

amount now raised by a tax on property—viz. for each dollar of property tax now paid, we shall pay more than \$6, if we adopt this scheme. When shall we be relieved from this load of oppression? Not at the end of one—nor of ten years. But, if every thing should operate with exact accuracy—if we should experience no disappointment, the people of the commonwealth may cherish a hope, that, they may find some relief, after they shall have groaned under this load of oppression, for the full period of seventy-nine years!! *We* must pass from the scene of action—our children must be numbered with the dead, long before the arrival of the day, when we may even hope for relief. It has been said by a most profound thinker, that the chief characteristic of the English people—inherited by their descendants here, is that, they associate as inseparable, the ideas of liberty, and of exemption from taxation. Is it to be expected that the people will submit to this exorbitant taxation, for the purpose of paying for their own property—tax themselves to pay themselves. Collect from *them* an amount sufficient to pay *them* for *their* slave property, you take from *them* an amount equal to the value of the slaves: and you had just as well take the slaves themselves. Let us examine into the amount, necessary to be raised for the purpose of effectuating this plan. There are within the limits of the commonwealth 469,724 slaves—which at an average of \$200 each, would command the sum of \$93,944,800. The cost of exporting our slaves to Liberia, at \$33 each, would be \$15,500,892. This sum added to the amount of the purchase money will afford an aggregate of \$109,445,692, to be raised in seventy nine years, exclusive of the amount necessary for the current expenses of the government.

My friend from Petersburg, has estimated the amount necessary to be raised, at \$115,000,000, exclusive of the civil list. Neither of us has stated any account of the expense to be incurred, for the purchase and exportation of one, born after the taking of the last census. We have only calculated the cost of purchasing and transporting those now in existence; the real expense would be greater than we have the means of calculating. Sir, the people cannot bear it; and rely on it, they will not bear it. The unconscious minds of gentlemen seem to have received an involuntary conviction of this truth; and, accordingly, we find the gentleman from Dinwiddie, already referring to other sources. We are directed towards the government of the United States: we are to ask our portion of the public lands. Virginia—disinterested, magnanimous Virginia, is to be dragged, as a mendicant, to the portals of the general government, to beg the

crumbs which fall from its sumptuous board! Can we expect effectual aid from that source? The largest sum ever received by the federal government from the public lands, was \$2,479,658 90 cents. The population of Virginia, in federal numbers, is about the one-eleventh part of the entire population of the United States. Should this suggestion be adopted, and attended with success, we may calculate on receiving the one-eleventh part of the whole amount annually derived from the public lands, which will about equal \$225,000. Deduct this sum from \$1,400,000, and you have a balance of about \$1,175,000 to be annually raised by a tax on property, exclusive of the current expenses of the government! And this system to endure, *at the least*, through the full term of seventy-nine years! Yet the ardent gentleman from Hanover, has maintained that the wisdom and practicability of this plan, has been demonstrated beyond the power of refutation. Sir, has it been shown that we may discharge an annual debt of \$1,400,000, by the payment of \$225,000? We must still farther lose our confidence in the resources of the public lands, if we reflect on the fluctuations in the price of lands,—the difficulty of making sales and collections;—and on the fact, that the entire stock of land may be exhausted before the expiration of seventy-nine years. It is also proper to remind the house, that all our estimates have been made, not on an *average* of receipts from the public lands, but on the largest amount of any one year.

Mr. Speaker,—If we disregard these suggestions, and prostrate the commonwealth, as a suppliant for charity at the hands of the federal government, and fail to obtain the wretched boon, what will be the sense of humiliation with which our people must be afflicted? And, sir, is it not probable that our application will be neglected and despised? that we ourselves, shall be spurned from the presence? Reflect on the remarks submitted by my friend from Brunswick (Mr. Shell). Shall we make a vain attempt to procure amendments to the constitution? Can we expect the co-operation of men who, by consenting to such an amendment, would virtually admit that their political career has been distinguished by a total neglect and disregard of the principles of the government which they have solemnly sworn to sustain? Would you consent to receive the boon? Would you accept a gratuity from the federal government, in the absence of all constitutional sanction? Sir, I trust it is impossible. I trust that this commonwealth is not destined by her own solemn and deliberate act, to invoke a violation of those sacred principles for which she has so often professed an inviolable attachment. Sir, I know not whether to express more of morti-

fication, or of astonishment, at the declaration of the gentleman from Dinwiddie, that no person ever heard of an objection to an appropriation of the avails of the public lands to this object, or to objects of a similar character:—that these avails constitute a distinct fund, which may be appropriated to literary purposes, and other objects of like character. Is it possible that this is so? Is there any clause in the constitution, any provision of any sort, which distinguishes the proceeds of the public lands from any other revenue of that government? When these proceeds go to the treasury, do they not mingle with all other monies, and constitute one common fund, for the constitutional purposes of that government? I say, I was filled with pain and astonishment, when I heard such a declaration emanate from such a source—from a Virginian—a southeastern Virginian, who professes to belong to the state right party. No man ever heard of an objection! Has the gentleman never heard of that transaction to which allusion has been made by the member from Kanawha? (Mr. Summers). Did he never hear of the last act of the political life of Rufus King? or, rather, of that act which terminated his connexion with the senate of the United States. And who, sir, was Rufus King? He was a federalist, it is true: he was a federalist of the *Rufus King stamp*: he was a federalist who had obtained that distinction with his party, as that his own name distinguished and characterised his party. But, does any man here doubt his patriotism? does any man here doubt his wisdom? Sir, he was a patriot, and a sage; and yet he was denounced by the whole southern community, for inviting the attention of the senate to the proposition now gravely and zealously sustained by the gentleman who represents the county of Dinwiddie! Yes, sir, it was said of Rufus King, that he could not retire through the portals of the senate, without turning to hurl a fire-brand at the south. Sir, this patriot and this sage, was not permitted to sink into the shade of retirement, without being stigmatized as a public incendiary; and yet his plan is now sustained in the very hall of the house of delegates, by the distinguished member from the county of Dinwiddie, who claims to belong to the state right party!! Sir, this suggestion may be sustained. I have, long since, learned to moderate my surprise at almost any human event; but the suggestion can only be sustained, at the entire sacrifice of opinions and principles heretofore held sacred within these walls. And suppose it should be sustained, both here and at Washington—Suppose that the gentleman shall succeed in engaging the government of the United States in “this grand and patriotic revolution,”—is it to be expected that the

government will confine its operations to the limits of this commonwealth? It must embrace the whole confederacy, and banish the black man from this continent. Let us contemplate the difficulties of this project of purchasing and transporting a nation of souls. There are now in the limits of the United States, 2,10,629 slaves, exclusive of free persons of color. These, at an average of \$200, would cost the sum of \$402,125,800. To transport them at the price of \$33 each, would cost \$66,350,750, affording a general aggregate for the purpose of purchase and transportation, of \$468,476,550: and it will appear, on the slightest examination, that this calculation is not sufficiently comprehensive; because, while the slaves of Virginia may, probably, be rated at an average of \$200 each, every body knows that sum would not be regarded as just compensation, in the southwestern states; and the cost of the undertaking, would be augmented in proportion to the increased average value. I ought here to repeat the suggestion, that this estimate embraces only the present number of slaves; and no account whatever is stated, of the cost and transportation of one, who may be born after this day. It must be obvious to the house, that this great object could not be accomplished at a cost less than *five hundred millions of dollars*!! The reflection may be disagreeable, but it is impossible to shut it out from the mind. There are no resources within our reach, equal to the accomplishment of this mighty project. The idea of compensation and transportation, cannot possibly be realized. It must ever prove a delusive phantom—it will ever flit before the imagination—it will forever elude the grasp. You cannot perform impossibilities—you cannot pay us for our slaves. You must first make them free men; freed by your own act of arbitrary legislation, and their present holders must sustain the loss.

Mr. Speaker,—this sentiment has been already avowed, openly, unreservedly avowed, by those generous and philanthropic gentlemen, who have stretched forth their hands, laid them on the altar, and called on the Great Ruler of the Universe, to witness the solemn dedication of themselves, to the accomplishment of their holy purpose. Yes sir, the devoted friends of abolition, who believe that our slaves have been held in servitude, by the mere force of an invincible necessity; which necessity they regard as removed—gentlemen who earnestly insist that, according to the laws of God and nature, man can not be property, have had the firmness openly to declare, that, we cannot of right demand compensation. Their sagacious minds have discovered, the utter futility of an attempt at this revolution, when they acknowledge, and act on, the idea of compensation. With a decis-

ion adapted to their ends, they have boldly assumed the position that, there is no binding obligation in the constitution, which secures the right to compensation. Sir, our property has been compared to a nuisance, which the commonwealth may abate at pleasure. A nation of souls to be abated by a mere effort of the will of the General Assembly! A nation of freemen to hold their property, by the precarious tenure, of the precarious will of the General Assembly!! And to reconcile us to our condition, we are assured by the gentleman from Berkeley (Mr. Faulkner) that, the general assembly in the abundance of its *liberality*, is ready to enter into a *compromise*, by which we shall be *permitted* to hold *our own* property, *twenty eight years!* on condition that, we then surrender it, absolutely, and unconditionally!! This *compromise*, he regards as *just compensation*; he avers it to be the only compensation, which, as a slave holder he will ever *deign to receive*: which as a statesman, he will ever *deign to give*. Sir, I cannot but admire the frankness with which these gentlemen have treated this subject. They have exhibited themselves in the fulness of their intentions; given us warning of their designs, and we now see in all its nakedness, the vanity of all hope of compensation. Is there one among us, who is disturbed with a troubled conscience? Does he believe that, by the detention of his slave, he offends against the will of Almighty Providence? Let him prepare his voluntary deed of emancipation; let it be executed without delay; let him not tease and tantalize himself, with the vain expectation of compensation from the public. Whenever his slave is emancipated by the agency of the public; it will be done *per vim*.

But, why should we discuss the title to property; why discuss the topic of *post nati*: on the assumption that, the black population is to be removed. The *sole* question which we can determine is, whether we will abolish slavery, and allow the manumitted blacks, to remain as freemen in this republic. You have not the means of purchase and removal: and if you had you have no domain to which they might be exported. As to the colony at Liberia, if it belonged to the General Assembly, it is inadequate to the reception of the blacks. I am indebted for this suggestion to my friend from Halifax (Mr. Bruce). According to the representations of those best acquainted with the affairs of the Colonization Society, that colony could not receive from Virginia, more than five hundred annually. But if it were exclusively *our own*, and if every acre of its territory, were capable of reclamation, and of adaptation to the uses of civilized man,—if the face of the country be interspersed, with no mountain, no morass, it could not receive our slave population. The length of their territory

is but about two hundred and eighty miles; its width but thirty five; it therefore only contains about nine thousand eight hundred square miles—which with a population of thirty to the square mile, (nearly twice as dense as the population of Virginia,) would only contain about 294,000 souls,—whilst the *slave* population of this commonwealth, is 469,724 souls,—exclusive of 47,000 free persons of color.

Mr. Speaker,---when I came to the house, I intended to discuss the doctrine of *post nati*---the subtle---fleeting doctrine of *post nati*---whose very essence consists in its subtlety---affirming as it does that, we have no property in the *increase* of our slaves, because that increase is not in existence---because it has no substantial form, on which the obligations of law may fasten:---but I cannot now subdue my feelings, to the examination of this legal question. The thought is constantly recurring to my mind,—will the house vote an act of emancipation, without the possibility of compensation? Sir, the response grates on the ear. We have heard it orally from the lips of gentlemen---we have seen it under their own signs manuel, in the form of speeches written out for publication---that, the General Assembly enjoys the right, of disredarding the provisions of the constitution, in regard to this species of property: and of wresting that property from our possession, without rendering compensation. Is it possible for gentlemen to suppose that, this can be accomplished in peace. Sir, I beg I may not be considered, as addressing any considerations to the fears of gentlemen. I never use the language of menace. It is not the part of a brave man, to endeavor to inspire his adversary with fear. I should despise myself if I thought myself capable of such an effort; I should despise the house, if I thought it capable of acting under such an impulse. But sir, it is the duty of statesmen, to act with candor towards one another. We must know, and appreciate the feelings of others, before our own conduct, can be marked with wisdom; and I announce it to these gentlemen, as a solemn,—as an immutable truth,—that they cannot succeed in the accomplishment of their undertaking, and maintain the peaceable relations of our citizens. Sir, it never can be accomplished, by the mere force of reason. It were vain to discuss abstract theories; it were vain to discuss subtle questions of law. This is a question which appeals to the feelings of men: and it is one, which must be settled by force. It is a fatal error to suppose, that, gentlemen can by the force of reason, wrest from the possession of our citizens, property which they received as an heritage from their fathers: and to which, they consider themselves entitled, by the law and constitution of this land. Sir, if they persist in the agitation

of the question—if we are to be annually convulsed by its thrilling consideration, our country will be embroiled in civil war. Citizen will be arrayed against citizen—Father will be arrayed against son—Brother must face brother—and friend, meet friend, in deadly conflict: there is no hope of averting these calamities, save that which is suggested, in the shocking contemplation of the division of the state.

Mr. Speaker;—my friend from Petersburg, a few days since, attributed the calamities of St. Domingo, to the deliberations of the constituent assembly of France. What national calamity might not that gentleman have attributed to the same fatal cause? That assembly disregarded the right of property. They denied the sanctity of private right. They confiscated the private property of the citizen. They confiscated entire species of property. They confiscated the property of whole orders of men. They sent forth their doctrines, to be published to the world. The public mind became tainted; the public sentiment became depraved. The public was inspired with phrenzied rage, which nothing could extinguish but the blood of the citizen. The French republic was steeped in blood. Sir, our brethren cannot have reflected that they are advancing the same opinions, the same sentiments, the same principles, which there occasioned these disastrous results. In the commencement of the French revolution, Marat and Mirabeau, sometimes trembled at the contemplation of the fearful precipice. Our orators, stimulated by their own generous feelings, rush to the accomplishment of their holy purpose, with the fire of enthusiasm burning on their cheeks. I conjure them to pause in their career. If it were their deliberate purpose to excite our slaves to universal insurrection, what topic could they have discussed which they have now left untouched? Have they not expatiated on the miseries of slavery, and depicted its sufferings in the most melancholy strains? Have they not portrayed the loveliness of liberty, and exhibited the goddess in all her decorations, to the excited imaginations of that race of men? Have they not invoked the genius of universal and eternal justice? Have they not recurred to the law of nature, and declared that, according to the provisions of that law, the black man has an indefeasible right to the full and free enjoyment of his liberty? Have they not addressed the most impassioned appeals to their heated and exasperated passions? Sir, I ask, and ask emphatically, what additional topic they could have urged, had they cherished the deliberate design of instigating our slaves to instantaneous insurrection? I cannot impute to them this design; but I admonish them—and solemnly admonish them, that the tendency of their conduct is to produce

this result. They inspire them with fatal hopes, which must terminate in disappointment, and in consequent desperation. They will stimulate them to fierce insurrection. They chafe and exasperate the caged Lion. They inspire him with wrath and fury. They rend the bars which restrain his rage, and send him to roam through the deep, dark forest, or to turn upon our families, and imbrue his fangs in the lifeblood of our little children. And, sir, when that great day shall come,—when our mansions shall be wrapt in flames, and the black smoke shall burst from our housetops:—when we shall be startled from our midnight slumbers, by the piercing screams of our bleeding wives:—when our little children, filled with terror, and clinging to the neck of their murdered mother's corpse, shall be torn away by the hand of the ruffian, dashed against the rock, or thrown, screaming, into the flames:—when our aged mothers shall call, in vain, for protection, from their slaughtered sons—where, I ask, will these gentlemen be found? Not leading,—not mingling with the black horde? No, sir, I do not say it. I do not believe it. I will not believe it. But where, I ask, will they be found? What are we to expect from the gentleman from Rockbridge? (Mr. Moore). Has he not told us that “the Autocrat of Russia does not more deserve the name of tyrant, for sending his hordes of barbarians to plant the blood-stained banner of despotism on the walls of Warsaw, amid the desolation of all that is dear to the hearts of freemen, than does the petty tyrant who, in any other quarter of the globe, is equally regardless of the acknowledged rights of man.” We know the import of this sentence. We know the firm spirit of the member from Rockbridge. We know that he would “sooner be precipitated into the presence of his offended God, with all his sins full blown upon his head, and with a lively conception of the horrors of a hell,” than stain his hands in the blood of a fellow being struggling for the recovery of the inalienable rights of man. What are we expect from the thoughtful gentleman from the county of Berkeley? (Mr. Faulkner). Already has he gloried and exulted in his own good fortune—already has he sent to the throne of grace, the fervent expressions of his gratitude, for having been allowed to record himself as one of the first champions of this “grand and patriotic revolution.” Will he endeavor to suppress a cause which he proclaims to be thus glorious? What are we to anticipate from the impetuous spirit of the gentleman from Montgomery? (Mr. Preston). Already has he likened this conflict to the generous efforts of Parisian patriotism. What, sir, I ask, are we to anticipate from the sublime genius of the gentleman from Kanawha? (Mr. Summers).

Already has he given life and being to the silent meditations of Thomas Jefferson; and declared, in the presence of an attentive world, that in the event of a conflict with our slaves, there is not a solitary attribute of Deity which could take part on the side of the white man. Could we expect of him to abandon his principles—defy the wrath of offended Heaven—and aid in the suppression of a cause which he has sustained with so much zeal and ability? Where then, I ask, are we to expect to find these gentlemen in that black, tremendous day? Not mingling with the black horde? No, sir; that cannot be. If such suspicion had fastened on my mind, I would insert my own talons, and tear the black conception from my brain. But, where will these gentlemen be found? With the genius of Byron—treading the mountain tops, and gazing on the desolation which burns through the plain!! Gracious Heaven! are these the just exponents of popular will? Have these sentiments universally obtained? Have they found general acceptance on the west of the lofty blue mountain? Have we no friends there, who cherish for the east, one generous sentiment? Is it to be regarded as a reproach, that they cherish some sympathy for our sufferings, and are disposed to extend to us the hand of affection, in the day of our great calamity? Shall they be rebuked and reproached, as black spots on the vestal robe? Sir, if these sentiments be diffused through the broad west—if they animate the mighty Alleghany, we have nothing to hope from the deliberations of the mountain, but a recurrence of the horrors of St. Bartholomew!

Mr. Speaker.—If gentlemen have not been hurried away by the heat and ardor of debate—if they cherish the fixed, the immutable purpose of renewing and pressing the consideration of this subject—then, I say, there is no hope of peace, except in a division of this great commonwealth. It is a sentiment which I announce with pain—with pain fixed and acute: but the spirit of candor compels me to the declaration, that I prefer DIVISION to the continued agitation of this question. And if the agitation of the question be continued, I shall, in every character which I may fill, exert myself to produce that *division*. I shall do so, myself—I shall earnestly recommend it to my constituents. Sir, you can readily imagine the agony which it cost, to proclaim to the world this determination of my mind. Duty required that I should apprise my adversaries of the existence of the sentiment. I feel that I have discharged that duty, and I leave the consequences to my country—to my God.



